

A photograph of a rusted, crushed metal car body lying on the ground in a forest. The car is the central focus, showing significant damage and decay. The background consists of tall, thin trees and a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

With Land,  
Without the State:  
*anarchist solidarity  
with the struggle in  
Wallmapu*

*these texts liberated from*  
*[chileboliviawallmapu.wordpress.com](http://chileboliviawallmapu.wordpress.com)*



## With Land, Without the State: Anarchy in Wallmapu

by John Severino

10/28/2010

### *“Walmapu Liberado Con Tierra, Sin Estado”*

The guards at the Temuco prison search us over, and lead us into a room off the main hallway. The four men come in a little later and begin telling us their stories. They choose their words solemnly, and take long pauses. Seventy days without eating has taken its toll. “Our bones hurt, we get dizzy, tired, we have to rest a lot, lay down a lot. It’s uncomfortable going so long without eating. But we’re going to go until the final consequences. We’re putting our bodies and health on the line for the Mapuche people.”

They start with what we already know: the reasons for the hungerstrike, the Chilean state’s use of the antiterrorist law against Mapuche warriors, and the long history of their struggle. When they find out we’re not human rights activists, but anarchists, they smile and warm up to us a little more. After all, the human rights organizations have shown concern for the Mapuche once they end up in prison, but have never taken a position on Mapuche independence. One of them tells us: “First Nations have given a deeper sense to the word ‘anarchy.’ We were the first anarchists. Our politics is an anti-politics.”

### Foundations

José Llanquileo is four years into a five year sentence for arson. For three years he was living in clandestinity with his partner, Angelica, and for a year was one of the Chilean state’s most wanted fugitives. In 2006, the two were finally captured. She was acquitted on charges of illegal association, under the antiterrorist law. He was convicted for burning pine trees on a forestry plantation belonging to a major logging company, as part of a land reclamation action. Now he gets work release during the day, and furloughs on the weekends, so he has time to take us around Temuco, introduce us to the hungerstrikers, and tell us his story.

We’ve come here as anarchists, to learn about the Mapuche struggle, to tell about our own struggles, to see where we have affinity, and begin

creating a basis for long-term solidarity.

Fortunately, we can start on a good foundation. The leftists have had a patronizing attitude towards the Mapuche, says José, but “the anarchists have been very respectful, and shown lots of solidarity. I think we should be grateful for that.” He’s clear, however, that the Mapuche’s struggle is their own. Marxism was influential at a certain moment, but they are not Marxists. One could characterize the Mapuche way of thinking as environmentalist, but they are not environmentalists. They have affinity with anarchists, but they are not anarchists. “We are Mapuche. We are our own people, with our own history, and our struggle comes directly out of that.” Contrary to the assertions of the leftists, the Mapuche are not the marginalized lower class of Chilean society. They are not the proletariat, and the idea of class war does not correspond to their reality. Consequently, they may find some affinity with the revolutionary movements that developed in the context of class war in European society, but these movements do not adequately address their situation.

“The Left consider the Mapuche as just another sector of the oppressed, an opinion we don’t share. Our struggle is taking place in the context of the liberation of a people. Our people are distinct from Western society.” Moreover, the Mapuche people have a proud history of fighting invasion, resisting domination, and organizing themselves to meet their needs and live in freedom, so their own worldview and culture are more than sufficient as an ideological basis for their struggle.

This point is stressed by nearly everyone we meet, and I think our ability to become friends and *compañeros* rests directly on the fact that we respect their way of struggle rather than trying to incorporate them into our way of struggle.

I want to be upfront with the people I meet, with whom I want to build relationships of solidarity, so on the first day I tell him my motivations and assumptions. The comrades who put us in touch already told José I’m an anarchist, and informed him of the kind of work I do, so the fact that he invited us into his community and took time off to guide us around is a good sign. I let him know that many US anarchists already have a little familiar with the Mapuche struggle, and our understanding is that their culture is anti-authoritarian, and they organize horizontally. Is this correct?

José says it is, but I notice a little eurocentrism on my part, a difference in worldviews, when he automatically replaces my word, “horizontal,” with the word “circular,” to describe Mapuche society. There is no centralization of power among the Mapuche, who in fact are a nation of several different peoples, living in different geographic regions, and speaking

for “nonconventional” hydrocarbon exploration. Chevron was recently convicted of contaminating 500,000 hectares of rainforest in Ecuador, home to other indigenous nations.

in Temuco under the antiterrorist law on August 1. The criminalization of the Mapuche struggle, and the use of the antiterrorist law and anonymous witnesses show the clear continuity between the Pinochet regime and the current government.

We also demand absolution of the three young women arrested in Temuco in March on the basis of planted evidence. The police are clearly frustrated that their “*Caso Bombas*” in 2010 fell apart due to lack of evidence and sheer implausibility. Now they are trying again, this time manufacturing evidence and unscrupulously planting it in a social center. They are only further embarrassing the Chilean government.

We will be paying close attention to these trials and spreading the word. We stand in full support of the accused.”

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There are Chilean consulates in New York, Miami, Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, San Juan, Boston, Honolulu, Las Vegas, and Seattle. <http://www.chile-usa.org/consular.htm>

In London Phone: 44 (20) 7222 2361 Fax: 44 (20) 7222 0861

Just a few companies that exploit Mapuche lands:

International Paper <http://www.internationalpaper.com/Locations/ipMap.asp>

Chevron <http://www.chevron.com/>

Iberdrola USA, a subsidiary of the Spanish energy company with major operations in South America [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iberdrola\\_USA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iberdrola_USA)

Enel, which owns Endesa [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enel#North\\_America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enel#North_America) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endesa\\_\(Chile\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endesa_(Chile))

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In other news, Mapuche have successfully halted the eviction of the community Marihuen en Coronel, just outside of Concepcion. On the night the police were supposed to arrive, July 10, community members and supporters maintained a large overnight vigil prepared for confrontation. In the next days they held a large, communal cultural event as the Chilean government announced it would reconsider the eviction.

And on the other side of the Andes, on July 16 Mapuche from various communities in the area of Neukén occupied several rigs of the North American oil giant Chevron, which recently won contracts in Argentina

different dialects of the same language. The land belongs to the community, and it is maintained collectively, as opposed to individually or communally. Each community has a lonko, a position generally translated as “chief,” but each family has a large degree of autonomy, and many decisions are made by the whole community in assemblies. Lonkos are usually men, but have been women as well. There are other traditional roles of influence: the machi is a religious figure and a healer. Men and women can become machis, but they are neither chosen nor self-appointed. Those who have certain dreams or get inexplicably sick as children, and who demonstrate a certain sensitivity, will become machis. Then there is the werken, the spokesperson, a role that has taken on explicitly political characteristics as Mapuche communities organize their resistance. Historically there were *tokis*, war leaders that different communities followed voluntarily, though currently no one plays this role, as the Mapuche have not gone to war since being occupied by the Chilean and Argentinean states in the 1880s.

I ask about gender relations and how the Mapuche view things like family structure and homosexuality, making clear my own feelings but also trying not to be judgmental. José says the Mapuche family structure is the same as in European society, and there is a great deal of conservatism, pressure to marry and have children, and disapproval of anything that falls outside of this format. He thinks that maybe it didn't used to be like that, and perhaps the Catholic missionaries and conservative Chilean society have changed traditional values. In any case, the women we meet during our limited time in the communities are all strong, active, vocal, and involved, and in the homes we stay in there seem to be a sharing and a flexibility of roles. The people in our group, meanwhile, don't try too hard to present as heterosexual or cis-gendered and don't have any problems.

It's an exciting time to be in Wallmapu. All the communities in resistance are united behind the hungerstriking prisoners, but behind the scenes, important debates are taking place. The hungerstrike, based directly on the ongoing struggle (all the Mapuche prisoners are accused or convicted of crimes related to land recovery actions, such as arsons targeting the forestry companies, or related to conflict with the Chilean state, such as the seizing of a municipal bus or a shooting that gave a good scare to a state's attorney), has focused the Mapuche nation and captured the attention of the entire Chilean population. It has won a popular legitimacy for the Mapuche struggle, undermining the demonization of the direct tactics they use and weakening the government's position in casting these tactics as terrorism. In this situation, the Mapuche can go beyond calls for greater autonomy or land reform within the Chilean state.

“The so-called Mapuche conflict doesn’t have a solution. The demands we have necessitate a break with the framework of the state. What we demand is sovereignty and Mapuche independence. We consciously propose the historical foundations of these demands [...] Our struggle is fundamentally opposed to capitalism and the state [...] I believe we have to open a space internationally to spread our demands. The Mapuche struggle has to be internationalist, as the struggle of a people. Many of the things that affect us, like capitalism and the states that represent it, the US, the EU, are an enemy to peoples, First Nations as much as oppressed classes around the world, and that’s a point of concordance.”

“The biggest problem is the advance of capitalism, in the form of investment on our lands. This is one of the principal threats that the Mapuche face because it means the exploitation of natural resources. These resources are on Mapuche lands, so investment means the expulsion of the inhabitants,” José explains. “Even while we’re recovering our lands, this investment is going on, which endangers everything we have achieved.”

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After a few days, we leave Temuco and head for the hills, to the town of Cañete, and then to the first of a couple autonomous Mapuche communities in resistance we’ve been invited into, in the area of the lake Lleu Lleu, south of the city of Concepcion. Mapuche communities have two names, or rather, the place has a name, and the group of people has another name. José’s community, Juana Millahual, at Rucañanko, sits on a steep hill above one arm of the lake. It is a small community, with just a few dozen families. José’s brother is lonko. The houses are mostly small, rectangular, wooden buildings sitting atop low stilts. José explains that the traditional houses, the ruca, had thatched instead of tin roofs, but these have been mostly burned down over the decades of struggle.

The oldest knowledge they have of the community is in 1879, when José’s great grandmother had 10,000 hectares. Now the community only has 300 hectares, but they are in the process of recovering 1000 more hectares, 220 of which they have occupied. “In these territories there is a profound transformation where big capital has exploited natural resources and where the Mapuche are trying to recompose their spaces.” They’re recovering their traditions and parts of their culture that were nearly lost, and when they retake a plot of land, they take it out of the hands of Capital “which says it exists to serve man and must be exploited. When the Mapuche occupy it, there is a revolutionary change, a profound transformation to the social, cultural, religious, and economic fabric.” When they recover land, their machis come and the whole community performs a *Ngillatun*, a major ceremony, to purge it from its time as private property

and commodifying their lands. The Mapuche resisted, holding on to their language and culture and rebuilding their communities. In recent decades they have been recovering their lands and are fighting to expel the occupying states and put an end to the capitalist regime which treats the land and all its inhabitants as commodities.

The 12 accused hail from various communities across northern Wallmapu, and all are longtime participants in the struggle for Mapuche independence. Many of them were imprisoned in the antiterrorism trial of 2010 that fell apart in the face of strong solidarity and an 80-plus day hungerstrike by the detained.

Several of them are facing other charges or currently completing their sentences for past trials, but thanks to widespread support and continuing resistance they have so far eluded the extremely long sentences police and prosecutors have been trying to achieve. The Chilean state wants to lock up these 12 and throw away the key. It hopes to break the back of the Mapuche struggle by permanently removing some of the most active and influential members of key communities in resistance.

By going after the same people again and again, prosecutors hope they can finally make the charges stick, despite a lack of physical evidence and an exclusive reliance on anonymous, paid informants.

The Mapuche have loudly proclaimed that their struggle for their lands is not terrorism. Terrorism is what the Chilean state does, harassing, beating, and shooting Mapuche youth and elderly, raiding Mapuche communities, and imprisoning those who speak out. The Mapuche will continue to work to expel the logging companies, mining companies, estate lords, and militarized police who have usurped their lands.

Let’s stand by them. Leading up to the trial and throughout the month of August, we can let the Mapuche know we support them, or show the Chilean state that their heavy handed methods belie their democratic pretenses.

And while we’re at it, let’s not forget the Temuco bombs case. After the 2010 “Bombs Case” in Santiago fell apart due to a lack of evidence, resulting in the acquittal of all the anarchists framed with the planting of bombs, the Chilean state has decided to give it another try.

In March, 2013, they raided an anarchist social center in the city of Temuco and planted bomb-making materials. They are charging three anarchists under the antiterrorism law.

Below are the phone numbers and emails of various Chilean consulates, and a sample message. But please, be creative and write your own message or plan an act of protest that makes our solidarity clear.

“We demand absolution of the 12 Mapuche being brought to trial

province, opening fire on community members. They then proceeded to steal the community's cattle, as police intervened to impede community members trying to stop the theft. In February of 2012 in the province of Nequén, nine families from the community Quintriqueo recovered a parcel of land that had been usurped by area landlords.

## The struggle continues

In April 2013, Mapuche saboteurs damaged a railroad line, causing the derailing of a logging company train with over 40 cars full of cellulose and leading to the extensive destruction of the line. The next month, masked *weichafe* blocked several highways with burning tires in and around Temuco. Their communiqué read: "All political prisoners on the street with no conditions! Down with the 28M frame-up! Expel the pigs from the Mapuche communities!"

[The 28M frame-up is the new "Bombs Case of Temuco," when several anarchists in Temuco were arrested on March 28, as police planted bomb-making material in the social center where they were arrested]

## Solidarity with the Temuco 12!

July 29, 2013

*Solidarity with the Temuco 12! Solidarity with the anarchists of the Temuco "Bombs Case"*

Starting August 1 and lasting at least until September 11, a dozen Mapuche who have been longtime fighters for total independence will be brought to trial, accused under the Chilean state's antiterrorism laws.

On June 28, 2009, Mapuche community members used fallen trees to block five highways in the area of Temuco. At the Temuco bypass, a Tur-bus (similar to Greyhound) and three trucks trying to cross the blockades were stoned by masked Mapuche warriors, who spraypainted "Return Mapuche lands" on the side of the bus.

Temuco is part of Wallmapu—the Mapuche territories—as recognized in numerous treaties with the Spanish crown and later the Chilean republic. For over 300 years the Mapuche successfully defended themselves from colonization in a series of wars. In the early 1880s, Chile and Argentina successfully invaded Wallmapu, dispossessing the Mapuche

and to communalize it.

At his house, during his weekend furlough, José tells us more about the Mapuche history. The Mapuche territories used to extend from near the present locations of Santiago and Buenos Aires, Pacific coast to Atlantic coast, south to the island of Chiloe. Farther south, on the southern cone of the continent, other peoples lived. They were hardy nations that survived the extreme temperatures without problems, but were mostly exterminated when the Europeans came.

José explains that *winka*, the term the Mapuche have given to the European invaders, simply means "new Inca." Before the arrival of the conquistadors, the Inca nation were already engaging in a sort of regional imperialism, which the Mapuche wanted no part in. The Inca armies got as far south as present-day Santiago, where they were defeated and consistently prevented from advancing any farther. When the Spanish arrived, the Mapuche treated them as just the most recent invaders, and defeated them as well. It's a point of pride that the Inca, who had an advanced, centralized civilization, fell easily to the conquistadors, while the Mapuche, who were decentralized, never did. What the Spanish couldn't understand was that there was no single Mapuche army. Each group of communities had their own *toki*, and if the Spanish won a battle against one group of warriors, as soon as they advanced a little farther they'd have to face another one.

During my time in Wallmapu, I think a lot about what it means to be a people. From the traditional anarchist standpoint, a people or a nation is an essentializing category, and thus a vehicle for domination. However, it becomes immediately clear that it would be impossible to support the Mapuche struggle while being dismissive of the idea of a people.

Hopefully by this point all Western anarchists realize that national liberation struggles aren't inherently nationalist; that nationalism is a European mode of politics inseparable from the fact that all remaining European nations are artificial constructions of a central state, whereas in the rest of the world (excepting, say, China or Japan), this is usually only true of post-colonial states (like Chile or Algeria) that exist in direct opposition to non-state nations. Many other nations are not at all homogenizing or centrally organized.

Going beyond this, though, is it essentializing to talk about a Mapuche worldview or way of life? The more I listen, however, the more I doubt my accustomed standpoint. To a great extent, Mapuche is a chosen identity. Most "Chileans" have black hair, broad faces, and brown skin, while less than 10% of the population of the Chilean state identify as Mapuche. In a context of forced assimilation and a history of genocide, choosing to identify as Mapuche is, on some levels, a political statement, a

willful inheritance of a cultural tradition and hundreds of years of struggle, and an engagement with an ongoing strategic debate that perhaps makes it legitimate to talk about what the Mapuche want, what they believe, in a more singular way. At one point, when we're talking about mestizos, José makes it clear that someone is Mapuche if they identify as such, even if they have mixed parentage. In other words the Western notion of ethnicity, which leaves no room for choice because it is based on blood quanta, does not apply. Also, the fact that the Mapuche call the Europeans the "new Inca" show that they do not have an essentializing, generalizing view of sameness between all indigenous peoples. On the contrary, many people we met specified an interest in connecting specifically with other First Nations that were fighting back against their colonization, showing that what they cared about was not a racial category, but a struggle.

So if Mapuche is a chosen identity based on a very real shared history, shared culture, and ongoing collective debate of strategy, is it actually all that different from the identity of anarchist? Well, yes: it has a longer history, tied to a specific geographic territory and cultural-linguistic inheritance. Anarchism also contains a greater diversity of worldviews, but on the flipside no one I met tried to present the Mapuche as homogenous, even as they talked about a Mapuche worldview.

In sum, the concept of belonging to a people brings a great deal of strength to the Mapuche struggle. Because the state falls outside of and against that people and their history, I find some elements of the Mapuche reality, of their world, to be a more profound realization of anarchy than I have found among self-identified anarchists. And considering that those anarchist movements that have been able to maintain just 40 years of historical memory (Greece, Spain) are consistently stronger than anarchist movements that have a hard time even understanding the concept of historical memory (US, UK), it is no surprise that the Mapuche, who maintain over 500 years of historical memory, are so strongly rooted that they seem impervious to repression.

## Fire

For the third time, I carry a smoldering branch from the cooking fire to the nest of dry kindling I've placed in the brush, and finally it catches, and the orange feathers flap and flutter like a bird stuck in a thorn bush. Despite all the anarchist romancing of fire, I've never before thought of arson like this.

Angelica and José have taken us to reclaimed land, a plot well suited for farming, where the hillside isn't so steep. José is driving the team

*werken* of the community Mawizache, for illegal possession of a firearm; another member of the same community and the *werken* of the community Trapilhue, both for public disorder. In March 2013, the communities of Mawizache, Trapilhue, and Wilkilko had to release a public statement, refuting an announcement by AyunMapu, a leftist Mapuche organization based in Santiago that a deal had been made to go ahead with the airport. The three communities asserted themselves as autonomous, contradicting the organization's claim that they were members. They emphasized that they had participated in a handful of protests alongside but not under the authority of AyunMapu.

In raids against communities in the area on April 30, police arrested three PEÑI, Jorge Painevilo Loncomil, Miguel Painevilo Licanán y Segundo Braulio Neculmán, and accused them of attempted murder, arson, and illegal possession of firearms. Two weeks later they were released pending further investigation. Their release was secured after a protest of several hundred outside the Temuco prison, and other mobilizations by communities hit with brutal raids in recent months.

On March 9, a large group of Mapuche blocked a major highway in the region with tree trunks and burning tires to protest the airport. The same week, a group of thirty temporarily seized the airport construction site.

## Lof Newen Mapu de Chequenco

In February 2013, Juan Millacheo, *longko* of Lof Newen Mapu of Chequenco, was arrested by Argentinian police in Nequén, Puelmapu, and handed over to their Chilean counterparts. Millacheo had been living in clandestinity for nine years after being condemned in 2004 to 10 years imprisonment for arson under the antiterrorist law. After three weeks, the Chilean courts accepted the defense's motion to have the sentence commuted to one year of conditional liberty with monthly sign-ins.

## Puelmapu

Puelmapu, the "Eastern Lands," are the part of Wallmapu east of the Andes, occupied by the Argentinian state since the 1880s. Although repression and colonization after the invasion were more brutal in Puelmapu, the Argentinian state has not succeeded in stamping out the Mapuche struggle.

In July, 2011, a group of half a dozen armed men, associates of a local *latifundista*, attacked the community of Lof Loncon in the Rio Negro



held in a juvenile detention center at Chol Chol, is currently on hunger-strike to protest the frame-up, which he and supporters say is intended to delegitimize the Mapuche struggle. Quijón carried out a hungerstrike in the prison at Angol shortly after his arrest. Marileo is also one of the accused in the Quino case.

The people of Wente Winkul Mapu and supporters have organized large protest marches to the courthouse to support Melinao, and in late May they began communally cultivating a tract of newly recovered land in protest of the use of the antiterrorism law and as a sign that they would continue their struggle.

## Pilmaikén

Communities along the river Pilmaikén, in the far south close to Osorno, are fighting against the planned installation of a hydroelectric dam that would flood the valley and destroy much land and many villages, as well as the sacred ground of Ngen Mapu Kintuante. The Williche (Mapuche from the far south) have proclaimed their right and responsibility of self-defense and the defense of their territory against any further incursions into the Pilmaikén watershed by the Chilean government, Conadi (the governmental institution for the development of indigenous peoples in Chile), and the company Pilmaiquen, S.A. The *ayllu rewe* of Ngen Mapu Kintuante currently has four people facing charges for actions against the dams, including the *machi* Millaray Huichalaf.

## Temucucui

On May 19, 2013, the *peñi* Orlando Benjamín Cayul Colihuinca was remanded to preventive detention pending trial for the arson of construction equipment. Cayul is a member of the community Temucucui Autónoma. The *longko* Victor Queipul and *werken* Jose Queipul, as well as several others of the same community, are also facing charges under different accusations. And on May 23, police raided the community, evicting and burning down several houses that had been constructed on land newly recovered from a *latifundista*.

## Freire Airport

Mapuche from several communities in the area of Freire, south of Temuco, are fighting against the construction of a new airport. In 2012, Chilean justice convicted three people involved in the resistance: the

of oxen over the acre that was cleared last year, pulling a heavy iron plow through the earth to make furrows for sowing potato and onion. The adjacent acre has already been seeded with barley. Angelica, meanwhile, is tending the fire. One fire is patiently cooking our lunch, while its children are spreading through the brush to clear the earth for next year's fields. And my friends and I are helping. Environmentalists starting forest fires, I snicker.

Of course, there's been no forest here for decades. This was a pine plantation on stolen Mapuche lands, identical rows of genetically modified, non-native pine trees planted by Forestal Mininco, a company owned by one of the wealthiest families in Chile. Ten years ago, a number of hectares were taken over by community members. At first, only the most politically active members of the community dared to participate in the re-occupation, and some others would come out to cook or otherwise give support. When the courts found out that both the community and the timber company held titles to the same land, they declared they could take no action, and on the ground the community members have overwhelmed the forestry employees. Now, it's basically a done deal, and the whole community comes out to farm the recovered land. Each family has its own plot of land that inheres to it individually. The recovered land, meanwhile, is communally owned and collectively maintained. One family will work a specific plot one year, but another family might work the same plot the next year. When needed, the whole community will get together to talk about how to use the land, but they seem to prefer to work things out on their own and informally, within the framework of common understandings of what's proper.

Soon enough, we figure out how to work the wind and fuel, and here and there, flames leap twenty feet to the sky before calming down and slowly gnashing through the thorn bushes and old pine stumps. It's a small section we clear, not even a quarter acre, but it's not bad for a day's work, and the watchword of the Mapuche I meet seems to be "*poco a poco*." Little by little.

Angelica finds me an herb, *sietevenas* (*Plantago lanceolata*), for me to press against the thorn-cuts on my ash-black hands, and then I walk down to the lake, the Lleu Lleu, to cool off in its waters.

Mapuche land takeovers began in the early 1990s, after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship, with groups like *Consejo de Todas las Tierras*. They would take over plots of usurped Mapuche lands for one day, symbolically, to remind themselves and the world that it was their land. It was an important step forward, but like any step forward, it wasn't enough.

“It didn’t frighten the big companies.” Angelica tells me how subsequently, in 1998, the C.A.M. formed, *Coordinadora de Arauca-Malleco*. By developing the tactic of “productive recoveries,” the CAM. “enraged” the landlords. They recovered land for good, coming in with a group of thirty people to cut down the trees, turning timber plantations into gardens so Mapuche communities could feed themselves. Back in Temuco, when I asked about all the “CAM”s I saw graffitied on the walls, José had joked that “CAM was to the Chilean state what Al Qaida is to the U.S. government.”

Angelica tells us how both she and José had been members of CAM, and it too was an important step forward, but they left the organization when they realized it had a fundamentally leftist way of thinking, “not truly Mapuche. We’ve always survived because we have our own way of thinking. We can build solidarity with the Left but we can’t become part of it; that would be against who we are.”

I ask if the land recovery actions sometimes involve replanting native forests. Angelica says that some Mapuche are replanting native tree species, and perhaps it needs to happen more often, but for now they are focused on planting gardens so they can win the ability to feed themselves, and create their independence at an economic level.

Later, she tells us about living in clandestinity. “For one thing, you don’t have any peace of mind. On top of that, you can’t plan for the future or have any projectuality. While you’re eating breakfast, you’ll be keeping your eyes on the road outside, ready to run at any time.” One time, a caravan of 400 cops with buses, tanks, water cannons, and jeeps came to arrest them, a huge display of force to show the futility of resistance. But Angelica saw the caravan when it was still on the other side of the lake, and they ran for the hills. “The whole path was green” with uniformed police.

Angelica gave birth to their son while the two were underground. Eventually they were caught when a neighbor became an informant for 500,000 pesos (about a thousand dollars). Angelica spent four months in pretrial detention and went through three trials, but was ultimately acquitted of “illegal association” under the antiterrorist law. Before being accused she had almost completed university, everything except the final exams, but it was a Catholic school and they wouldn’t let her take the exams in jail so she never got her diploma. Now, in her community on the banks of the Lleu Lleu, she smiles at the thought of university.

On the way back from the fields, José has me help him return the oxen and the plow to the neighbors from whom he has borrowed them. He talks to the oxen in a special language or touches them on a shoulder with a long stick to guide them through the turns, and they need no more prompting than that. As we walk he tells me more about the Mapuche

stolen lands. The Luchsingers are the primary usurpers of Mapuche land in the county.

## Wente Winkul Mapu

Wente Winkul Mapu, another highly active community on recovered land near Ercilla, was the site of a violent police raid in April 2012. Such raids are extremely common against Mapuche communities in struggle, resulting in the terrorizing of residents, the traumatization of children, brutality against the elderly, destruction of houses, and the stealing of tools and money. However, in April 2012, things turned out a little differently. One cop ended up dead. Apparently, the highly militarized, intensively trained, armed-to-the-teeth GOPE (Grupo de Operaciones Policiales Especiales) opened fire on themselves, killing one. Of course, the Chilean police are not about to let their stupidity and ineptitude go unpunished. They are claiming that someone inside one of the houses fired the shot, though they do not explain how the shooter got away from the surrounded village.

At the end of April 2013, police arrested the *werken* of Wente Winkul Mapu, Daniel Melinao, and accused him of complicity in the cop’s murder. Melinao is a highly active, longtime participant in the Mapuche struggle. It is not a coincidence that police arrested him at the bus station in Collipulli as he was on his way to Concepción to participate in a panel discussion about repression against Mapuche communities.

At a court appearance shortly after Melinao’s arrest, police arrested the *longko* of the nearby community of Temucuicui, Victor Queipul, accusing him of disorder, a charge that could bring a couple years of imprisonment. The *longko* had come to the appearance in solidarity with Melinao. Melinao was denied provisional release and sent to prison to await trial. The prosecutor revealed that they are searching for Erik Montoya, also of Wente Winkul Mapu. Two anonymous paid witnesses claim to have seen Montoya open fire on the cop during the raid. Montoya is in clandestinity.

In June 2012, police raided Wente Winkul Mapu searching for Montoya, entering houses without a warrant and smashing everything. When the *weichafe* of the community forced the cops out, they opened fire with tear gas and bullets. They shot one young *weichafe*, Gabriel Valenzuela Montoya, in the back. Six others were wounded, including Gabriel’s grandfather and three minors. Gabriel evaded arrest for the confrontation by hiding until police left. He later denounced the police. Perhaps in retaliation, in November of the same year he was arrested and accused of a robbery-murder along with Luis Marileo of the community José Guiñón and Leonardo Quijón of the community Chequenco. Gabriel, who is being

to trial on new charges, again under the antiterrorism law. Many of them have already been imprisoned in the past, and some of them participated in the major hungerstrike of 2010 which ultimately caused the government to withdraw its use of the antiterrorism law and release the accused with “time served.” This case constitutes an attempt to lock up some of the most active and well known participants in the Mapuche struggle, on the accusation that they have formed an illegal network spanning multiple communities. Throughout the investigation period, police have also harassed, interrogated, and in some cases even arrested the children of those accused (though in the latter case charges have always been dropped or resulted in absolution).

### Lof Yeupeko-Katrileo and the Vilcún fire

Shortly after midnight on January 4, 2013, the mansion of the major *latifundista* and usurper of Mapuche lands Werner Luchsinger was set ablaze at Vilcún, near Temuco. The bodies of Luchsinger and his wife, Vivianne McKay, were found inside. Werner was the cousin of fellow businessman and *latifundista* Jorge Luchsinger. On January 3, 2008, Mapuche *weichafe* Matias Catrileo was shot in the back and killed by police guarding Jorge Luchsinger’s estate against an action to pressure the *latifundista* with the longterm goal of recovering stolen lands. Police opened fire on the crowd with automatic weapons. Catrileo was killed while running away.

The *machi* of Lof Yeupeko-Katrileo, Celestino Córdoba, was arrested and accused of the arson and murder under the antiterrorism law. At the end of May, the Chilean prosecutor filed a request for life imprisonment. Supporters have organized many marches and religious ceremonies to aid Córdoba, whose health has deteriorated rapidly since his imprisonment. According to the Mapuche, the *machis* do not often fare well in prison when their connection with the land is broken. When the Mapuche culture was more heavily repressed, the *machis*, or those who would have become *machis*, were often locked up in mental institutions. Córdoba is also accused of the December 2012 arson of another *latifundista*’s home, for which the prosecutor is seeking an additional 36 years of imprisonment.

The leftist Mapuche organization CAM publicly denounced the arson. They attributed what they saw as an irresponsible act to the Temuco prisoners who split with them during the 2010 hungerstrike. Thanks to CAM’s politicking and their attempt to avert the blame, a *weichafe* had to go into clandestinity.

Lof Yeupeko-Katrileo, renamed in remembrance of Matias Catrileo, is leading the struggle in the county of Vilcún for the recovery of

worldview. “Unlike Western society, the Mapuche don’t see humans as the center of the world. We don’t think humans are the perfect species that can dominate all the other species. We understand that we are just a part of the world.” In turn I tell him about debates anarchists have had, regarding animal liberation, ecocentrism, and veganism. When we reach the neighbors’ house, the oxen bow their heads so we can untie the yoke, and then they wander off in search of hay. We take a shortcut back to the house, following the path he and Angelica used to escape the police, a few years earlier.

### We don’t want autonomy

Hector and Sara live with their daughters in another community on the banks of the Lleu Lleu. The community consists of about 300 families living on 400 hectares, and is trying to retake another 1000 hectares. They live amongst gentle, rolling hills that are partially forested. Alongside their house, which they’ve just finished building themselves, Hector and Sara have a large garden, and higher up on the hill a field for potato and barley. Someone in the community owns a tractor he rents out for plowing, otherwise they would plow with oxen. In their garden they practice organic agriculture, though they haven’t yet begun to implement this practice in the fields.

They have chickens and a steady supply of eggs, dogs that live in the space under the house and warn of anyone approaching, they make their own bread and cook and heat the house with a wood stove. The house has a water connection but no sewage; all the graywater drains into the garden, and at the edge of the yard is an outhouse.

Proudly, Sara shows me a line of trees they have planted near their house, all native species like the linque, hualle, and hazelnut. “We found the seedlings up in the mountains and brought them down here,” she explains. The top of the hill is still covered in exotic eucalyptus trees, which drain the water table, but they’re harvesting the eucalyptus for firewood and slowly replacing them with native species.

They want their daughters to go to school at least until they learn how to read, but there doesn’t seem to be any great pressure to attend. During the days that we stay with them, one daughter seems to be playing hooky permanently. Sara says she likes to bring her daughters along on land recovery actions so they can get a sense of the struggle, and an understanding that all this is their territory.

In the past, most young Mapuche went to the cities but now an increasing number are staying in the country. What they really need now

is an independent school in their community, that will not train Chilean citizens but will be based in the Mapuche worldview.

Both Hector and Sara used to belong to the CAM but they have since left it. “The CAM came from the outside and did their work very well, but after the actions they’d leave, and who would receive the consequences? The community. We don’t think that’s a good strategy. We work inside the community to make the struggle from the inside. Even if it takes 15, 20 years.”

CAM, though it was the most radical Mapuche organization until recently, proposes autonomy instead of independence, meaning that the Mapuche would receive cultural and political rights, and perhaps their own regional government, within the Chilean state. Some of their lands would be returned to them, though ownership would still be formulated according to the existing capitalist laws. An increasing number of Mapuche are beginning to think that the time has come to openly propose independence, restoring the pre-1880 borders, as guaranteed by multiple treaties with the Spanish crown and the Chilean state, and restoring a sovereign Wallmapu, self-organized according to its own cultural traditions, circular, ecocentric, decentralized, and nonhierarchical.

We talk with Hector and Sara about all the similarities between the struggles in Wallmapu and in Euskal Herria, the Basque country. The Basques have won an autonomous government within the Spanish state, and some cultural rights for the preservation of their language, coupled with an even stronger repression that applies the antiterrorist law, torture, and long prison sentences against anyone who fights by any means for the full independence of the Basque people. If that’s autonomy, “then we won’t fight for autonomy,” laughs Sara.

As the Mapuche struggle strengthens, the repression also becomes more effective. In the past, the police would come into Mapuche communities and get lost, but now they know where everything is. Now there are also police experts who know Mapudungun, the language, and there are more infiltrators, like one university student from Concepcion whose testimony led to several arrests, and who is currently working in Mexico, they say. “Bachelet,” the Socialist president who preceded Piñera, “had two faces. She showed a nice face, and then sent in the repression. There was more repression with her than there is now.”

In fact, a number of young Mapuche were killed by police during the previous government. Three cases are best known, and their names grace the walls of many towns and cities around the Mapuche territories. Alex Lemun, shot in the head near Angol. Matias Cachileo, shot in the back in January 2008 on the estate of a big landlord, his body fell into a canal and

power, dies at the hands of those who struggle? If Chileans who are committed in their support of the Mapuche struggle cannot convince their compatriots to resolve this incoherence by shedding their civic qualms, then either the Mapuche struggle has already encountered the outer limit of its available tactics, or the Chilean state will successfully be able to apply antiterrorism law in repressing them.

On the international level, the Chilean state wants to project itself as a stable, developed nation that honors its business contracts and respects the rule of law. The level to which international solidarity can disrupt this projection is added weight to the other side of the scale which prosecutors, governing officials, and businessmen have brought out to see if they can successfully utilize this new tool against the Mapuche.

An additional fact surpasses such calculations: successful international solidarity would also serve as a bridge by which lessons of struggle, and of the nature of capitalism, that are elucidated in the context of the Mapuche struggle can be spread across the world and applied to our own battles.

This is the situation which gives sense to our solidarity, and it is only in this context that we present the following list of major cases of repression. Below: the real people, the specific clashes. Above: the lay of the land and the general motions of the war we are fighting.

## The Quino Case

On October 10, 2009, a group of Mapuche blockaded the highway at the Quino toll station. On the sole evidence of a highly paid confidential informant, the Chilean state arrested 10 *peñi*, accusing them under the antiterrorism law of attempted murder, illegal association, robbery, and arson. The accused are José Queipul Huaiquil, Víctor Queipul Millanao, Camilo Tori Quiñinao, Felipe Huenchullán Cayul, Juan Huenchullán Cayul, José Millanao Millape, Juan Patricio Queipul Millanao, Jorge Marimán Loncomilla, Ernesto Cayupán Meliñán and Luis Marileo Cariqueo. The case faced a series of legal setbacks as judges struck down the use of the antiterrorism law, and later acquitted the defendants for lack of evidence. However, the prosecutor, pressured by the government and local business interests, continues to press new charges. One maneuver was to break off the cases of two of the accused, who are minors. Even after the others were acquitted, the two minors from the communities of Temucuicui and Cacique José Guiñón were brought to trial separately, and still under the antiterrorism law, in May 2013 (with results still pending). There are also indications that others previously accused in the case will be brought back

with heavy modifications: defendants are never allowed to know the identity of the paid informants testifying against them, therefore they can make no specific challenges to the informants' veracity.

The Chilean state is attempting to stretch an already precarious legal foundation to bring the repression against the Mapuche into the realm of anti-terrorism. Three years ago, a disciplined hungerstrike backed by committed and expansive support defeated the government's previous attempt to prosecute the Mapuche as terrorists. (See these articles about the 2010 hungerstrike [<https://chileboliviawalmapu.wordpress.com/2010/10/28/mapuche-hungerstrike-ends-for-some-continues-for-others/>] and a statement by some of the hungerstrikers [<https://chileboliviawalmapu.wordpress.com/2010/10/28/clarification-by-mapuche-prisoners-on-the-end-of-the-hungerstrike/>]).

Now, the government is trying again, pinning its hopes on the Quino case, in which a dozen *peñi* face up to twenty years in prison. If they succeed at the social level in applying antiterrorism law, they will have achieved a powerful tool in capping the Mapuche struggle, isolating those elements most committed to full independence and forcing the rest on the path back to a democratic solution that does not challenge the integrity of the Chilean state nor the capitalist ideas of alienated land and alienated freedom on a global level.

What we can induce is the following: the Chilean state, predictably enough, wishes to respond to every single major act of Mapuche illegality by taking hostage people it has identified as valuable to the struggle, utilizing the logic of collective punishment. The particulars of its situation require it to protect the democratic pretext for repression. Therefore, the success or failure of Chilean state repression against the Mapuche is a function of the extent to which that repression can be justified to Chilean society on democratic grounds, grounds on which the ruling class and the ruled can be said to have a unity of interests, because it is only within such a narrative that the argument of public order and safety makes sense.

Domestically, the segment of the Chilean population which the state fears has already demonstrated it will sympathize with the Mapuche struggle even if they burn down logging trucks, construction equipment, warehouses, developments, and mansions (something they frequently do). But in the last year, with the deaths of a couple estate lords, Chilean sympathy has waned. Although incoherence is a universal position under the yoke of capitalism, still we must call out their position as incoherent. These same people all sighed in regret when Pinochet died peacefully in his bed, claimed by old age rather than an act of vengeance. Why, then, do they moan and fret when a Luchsinger, one of the very bedrocks of Pinochet's

had to be fished out. Mendoza Colliu, shot in the back in August 2009. "All of them were shot from behind, none in the front," Hector explains gravely. "They were all running!" Sara adds, and they start to laugh.

They talk about how the struggle is growing beyond the exhausting cycle of action, arrest, and support, and how they need to develop a legal aid organization, as a shield, to function alongside the more militant parts of the struggle.

The Mapuche are by no means victims. These confrontations have taken place during a forceful struggle for the recovery of their lands. In the community, there used to be some trailers where timber employees lived, watching over the usurped lands. Around the 2004, the houses were set on fire, and the workers and their families were burned out. Then the state set up a makeshift command center where a number of police lived, to guard the timber plantation. Chile's strategy of control is highly legalistic, so instead of hiring mercenaries or paramilitaries as they might in other countries, the timber corporations rely directly on police protection.

Around 2006, it was time for the police to go. This time, the community members didn't come in the night, but in the daytime, in their hundreds, and forced out the police. Since then, that particular pine plantation has been unprotected, and the community has begun clearing it so they can plant fields. Up until then, the forestry company wanted to rent out land right on the banks of the lake, the Lleu Lleu, to build a tourist hotel. The local Mapuche would receive employment, Hector relates with disgust, working at the hotel for the tourists, selling them vegetables, cleaning their toilets. After the police were forced out, the hotel project was put on hold. Some tourist cabins owned by outsiders were also torched around this time. Nearby there are a few vacation cabins owned by Mapuche and rented out in the summers to generate some income, but they are low key and exist on the terms of the community members themselves.

There is, however, a problem with indigenous capitalism. Hector and Sara relate one story of a community member who used his lands for small-scale agribusiness, and others who kicked out the logging companies only to continue to harvest and sell exotic trees on that land. But the only companies able to buy the lumber were the very same logging companies, so in the end they didn't care who controlled or managed the land as long as it continued producing under a capitalist logic. Recreating capitalism within their struggle is a recognized danger.

And then there are Mapuche politicians. There are those who work with the government, and those who try to form political parties to co-opt the struggle, "but there is no Mapuche political party, it doesn't exist, because we closed the door and they're left on the outside."

“The Mapuche can have their independence, but if they lack the spiritual side of things it’s nothing. A Mapuche without *nepen* is not Mapuche.” *Nepen*, they explain, means strength, but it is also the strength of nature, or the energy one receives from the natural world. “The time when the sky goes from dark to light is when you receive all your strength.” Accordingly, there is a specific Mapuche ritual that one undertakes in times of difficulty, getting up before dawn to ask for strength and draw on the power of the world.

## Timber!

A 50 year old pine tree, standing 100 feet tall, does an incredible thing to sound as it falls towards the Earth. First, when it first starts to lean, you are incredibly attuned to every creak and crack of wood. Then, as soon as nothing is left holding it up, the gravity of its fall pulls all other sounds with it into an acoustic black hole, and the whole world goes silent. Then, just before impact, you become aware of a terrible wind, as all the thousand branches pull faster and faster through the air. Finally, when the great tree hits the ground, you feel the thunderclap in your very bones, as if for a moment, you are the tree.

It’s a sad thing to kill such a great tree, especially with a tool so crude as a chainsaw. But death can also be an occasion for joy. This tree should not be here, and in its body is held 50 years of richness, that a colonizing company tried to steal, but that will now be returned to the soil from which it came. Next year, there will be a fire, and the ashes will come back as potatoes or *avellano* (hazelnut) trees.

We spend the day walking through the plantation, cutting down trees here and there, staying on the move. At one point we pass the burned out remains of old trailers, spraypainted with Mapuche slogans, and the flipped over, rusted wreck of a police car. Here there was a battle, a victory. The land reclamation on this terrain is a new one, but already a field has been plowed in its midst. Next year there will be more. Little by little.

On the road 50 meters away, a big red pickup truck stops abreast of us. It could be company workers, or undercover police. We run into the woods. The struggle continues.

## Clandestinity

It’s late at night when we’re taken over winding roads to the place where Juan Carlos Millanao is hiding. He’s on the run, living a few months now in clandestinity, accused of a crime under the antiterrorist law. The prosecutor

for day to day existence (as nearly every farm tool is a potential weapon). This mode levies psychological exhaustion, producing a negative incentive which the NGOs, development funds, and charity projects that offer a positive incentive away from struggle are always waiting to take advantage of. The Chilean state specifically deploys lower intensity repression to isolate Mapuche communities in struggle, dissuading travel between communities and obstructing those from outside who would visit Mapuche communities. Counterinsurgency in Wallmapu also means protecting and promoting the capitalist development that molds the landscape in the furtherance of social control: monoculture deserts of pine plantations that suck up the water, ruin the soil, and supplant the native plants and animals that make the Mapuche way of life—their medicine, rituals, food culture—possible; megaprojects like dams, airports, and highways that displace communities and accelerate military and economic intervention into the territory.

The higher intensity mode of repression seeks a hostage for every outrage against a democratic solution to the “Mapuche conflict” that the *weichafe* commit. Sabotage and arson have been normalized at this point that the police are unable to arrest a suspect for every illegal action that is carried out, not without abandoning their pretext of legality. But every time a cop or *latifundista* is killed, or a major infrastructural project is targeted, the Chilean state selects several influential Mapuche to take the fall.

The Chilean state highly values its veneer of legality as a tool for achieving the consent of the governed by symbolically distancing itself from the dictatorship that ended in 1990. This is a difficult task as many Chileans remain suspicious of the government and many more are armed than when the military government took over in 1973. Twice a year, Chileans mark the continuity of their suspicions and in the *poblaciones* they test out their weaponry, often on police. Many Chileans also sympathize with the Mapuche struggle. (An excellent documentary that explains this background is *The Chicago Conspiracy*).

The Chilean state faces the same limitations as any state that tries to apply criminal law as a tool to repress a popular struggle. They have to break their own laws if the tool is to have any chance of getting the job done. This would not be a problem in a more sedated democracy, but the Chilean state in particular is sensitive about the effectiveness of its democratic image.

Generally, the only way the Chilean state is able to manufacture evidence adequate for convictions that nominally follow legal rituals is through the dubious figure of the anonymous protected witness. Mapuche communities and their capacity for vengeance are strong enough that the age old tool of the snitch could only be applicable to the Mapuche conflict

supporting prisoners, often in a fetishizing way  
*rewe*—a voluntary aggrupation of *lof* in a contiguous local territory  
Wallmapu—the Mapuche territories, or “all the lands”  
*weichafe*—warrior  
*werken*—literally a messenger, a community authority responsible for working on behalf of the community and maintaining connections with other communities  
*weupife*—a person in a community responsible for maintaining and transmitting the collective historical memory  
*winka*—literally “New Inca,” meaning white person or non-indigenous person

## Ongoing Repression in Wallmapu

John Severino  
June 15, 2013

A continuation of “*The Intensification of Independence*”.

**A**wareness of repression should never be turned into a list of cases and prisoners. Those who struggle must understand repression strategically. If the essence of repression is isolation, this means intentionally formulating our responses to overcome that isolation, both by connecting them to the lines of our ongoing struggle, and analyzing and thwarting the particular mechanisms through which the State seeks to isolate us.

In Wallmapu, that ongoing struggle is a struggle for the land, not as an alienated possession, but as a whole relationship outside of and against capitalism. Mapuche in struggle take over their traditional land, fighting with cops and landlords to do it, and sometimes burning them out; they block highways and sabotage the industries that would exploit their lands; and they farm, graze, and common in those lands, build their houses there, hold their rituals there, raise their children, marry, and bury their dead there, making their relationship with that land a solid fact.

Chilean state repression against the Mapuche demonstrates two distinct modes. One mode operates at a lower intensity, and is less likely to be recognized within the format of the anti-repression list that pretends to confront repression by reacting to its most obvious manifestations. This lower intensity mode manifests in constant surveillance, in raids that brutalize community members, traumatize children, and confiscate tools needed

is seeking 73 years imprisonment in his case. He tells us his story. He left his community at 16 years old, and lived in the city for nine years, homeless, learning a few different trades in order to survive. In 1990, he returned home, but found that no one was talking about struggle. So he went to Santiago, where he found a job in a mine in the north. For 10 years he worked in the mine, occasionally coming back home to bring money and participate in the struggle, leaving again before he appeared on the authorities’ radar. For years he supported the struggle and evaded arrest. After ten years of work, his community finally took over the estate that had usurped some of their lands, and he returned home to live and think about independence. “I have to fight for my people,” he says.

“The Mapuche struggle has all it needs,” he tells us. “And we’re always three steps ahead of the state.” They’re very strategic, he explains. Once, they took over an estate surrounded by a moat and electric wire and guarded by police. Hundreds of people came to protest and confront the police at the front of the estate, and then others appeared inside the property, behind the police, and burned it down. The police never figured out how they got in, he chuckled.

Clandestinity, explains Juan Carlos, rarely lasts more than two years before the fugitive is caught, but going on the run can show contempt for state justice and a refusal to submit to their institutionality. The time on the run can also make things more difficult for the prosecution, as witnesses are lost or change their story.

At another point in the conversation, he explains how important the lake is to people in that region, and how it’s no coincidence that it’s kept so clean. Earlier, we had been brought across the lake on a little motor boat, because travelling from one side to the other was almost impossible, but usually the lake is undisturbed, and a motorboat will never be left in the water when it is not in use. He jokes that if any tourists came and tried to jet ski on the Lleu Lleu, they would be taken care of. “We Mapuche are very good with a rock and sling,” he smiles.

When I ask about their relations with the anarchists, he agrees that they give good solidarity, but the Chilean anarchists “lack *newen*.” The spiritual side is completely missing, and that’s a great weakness, he says.

The hunger strikers in the Temuco prison also underscored the importance of their spirituality. Their machis had been able to visit them and tend to them while they were locked up, and this support allowed them to go much longer without eating.

## Little by little

Mauricio Huaquillao, one of the hunger strikers in the Temuco prison, told us: “We want to rebuild our people, and this project directly leads us to confront the state by all means possible. Until now we haven’t had any armed organizations. We’re dangerous for our ideas.”

The best solidarity is based in personal relationships and reciprocity. As anarchists continue to support the Mapuche struggle and attack those who repress them, we also gain a great deal, as the Mapuche burn out the shallow foundations of State and Capital in one corner of the world, and continue to develop a profound struggle we can learn a great deal from.

We also have been struggling for hundreds of years, but we need to revive these roots in order to gain strength from them. We can see that there are a hundred paths of struggle, and a hundred kinds of anarchists who are not anarchists, comrades who are different, and separate, but reflect a little of ourselves, in our shared love of freedom and hatred of domination. As anarchists, we do not need to belong to the same organization as them, use the same strategy, or adopt the same worldview, to fight together and apart as comrades, because we are against the world of forced centralization.

Hopefully, they will succeed in moving from autonomy to independence, and hopefully we will succeed in finding roots in rootless countries, and developing a strength that goes far deeper than repression.

For Land and Freedom, we continue.

## The Intensification of Independence in Wallmapu

John Severino  
June 10, 2013

*The Intensification of Independence in Wallmapu Critical Reflections on a Solidarity Trip to Generate Electricity in one Mapuche Community in Struggle*

In the last decade, an increasing number of Mapuche communities have carried out the “productive recovery” of their lands. Using direct action to take back their traditional territory from whomever has

The people in Lof Pañihue were very clear: being able to produce their own electricity would be a powerful form of sabotage against the State. Theirs was not a case of middle class people putting solar panels on their houses, selling the surplus back to the power company, and living with a cleaner conscience. It is a war to recover their territory, to kick out the State, the capitalists, and the Western way of life. If they end their dependence on the State’s infrastructure, not only have they intensified their practice of independence, they have also made that state infrastructure vulnerable to attack.

It is often said that there is no outside to capitalism. This is certainly true as far as capitalist projectuality is concerned, but the statement does not truly define our counter-activity unless we accept alienation as a physical feature of reality. Where land is being retaken as a part of ourselves, building the tools and developing the lost skills that allow us to relate directly to that land and to live as a part of it constitute a practice of independence from and against capitalism.

Our freedom is not merely a blank slate or the lack of imposition by the State. Freedom must be articulated ever more intensively, through the tools, skills, worldview, medicine, historical memory, food culture, and material anchors that constitute the becoming or the embodiment of that freedom.

## Glossary

Bío Bío—a river that runs west from the Andes and empties into the Pacific at the modern day site of Concepción. For hundreds of years, this was the treaty-guaranteed northern boundary of the Mapuche territories.

*che*—person or people

*gringo*—European or North American

*lamuen*—sister or *compañera*

*latifundistas*—major landowners, a holdover from the colonial system of production

*lof*—a Mapuche village community

*longko*—the closest translation is chief, although not a coercive figure and only one of several vocational authorities at the community level

*machi*—medicine man, a spiritual leader and healer (can be man or woman)

*mapu*—land, earth, territory, or space

*newen*—force or strength, of the kind that flows from nature

*peñi*—brother or *compañero*

*presismo*—prisonerism, a dead-end practice of obsessively or ritualistically



anarchists. That trip made it possible for Mapuche comrades to suggest the present project to us, allowing our solidarity to advance to a new level. This is an indictment of those anarchists who either travel for mere personal pleasure, or those who use the contacts they cultivate as a form of social capital to hoard.

### When the Line between Self-Sufficiency and Sabotage Becomes Fine

Why is it that in a context of total alienation, projects that focus on self-sufficiency or going back to the land almost invariably entail a cessation of hostilities with the State and a recuperation by Capital? The answer is probably equally related to the implications of buying the land or space for one's autonomy, and a spiritual acceptance of the *a priori* alienation between person and environment.

The Mapuche struggle involves the forceful recovery of land they uncompromisingly claim as theirs, and a way of being—by this I mean a seamlessly interlocked spirituality, economy, and social organization—that declares war on the alienation between person and environment. In this way of being, there is no dividing line between gardening, home-building, natural medicine, setting fire to logging trucks, clashing with cops, sabotaging construction equipment, or blocking highways.

Self-sufficiency signifies a contraction of one's relationships and an avoidance of the lines of social conflict. One who is self-sufficient need not form relationships with others. But the claiming of space and the inalienability of one's relationship to that space asserts an expansive web of relationships that we must defend in order to truly be alive.

In my free time in Wallmapu, I learned to harvest and thresh quinoa, to kill and gut a chicken, and to gather certain wild plants. In that particular context, these were not hobbies that might eventually be put to use in a strategy of avoidance. Capitalism has been very deliberate in deskilling us, which is a way of robbing us of the possibility of intimately relating with the world around us. "Relating with the world around us" is not a leisure activity, as the bourgeois imagination would have us believe. It does not mean (only) walking barefoot and spending time with nature, or playing games and having picnics in the park. It also means feeding ourselves, healing ourselves, housing ourselves, and a hundred other activities. Doing things directly always requires relating with other living beings rather than relating with commodities. Feeding ourselves, within an offensive practice that seizes space from the State, is not at all a form of avoidance, but an intensification of our freedom and our war on the State.

usurped it—usually logging companies or *latifundistas*—they take this land out of the capitalist market and put it to a traditional use for local needs, either through farming, grazing, or forest commoning. While this line of struggle has been hugely successful, inspiring other communities to begin forcefully taking back their own lands, those that have ejected the usurpers and asserted their claims to the land have often faced new problems.

After a community successfully reclaims its lands, repression usually decreases and quality of living improves, leading to a different atmosphere in which the struggle is less conflictive. In this new, more comfortable atmosphere of struggle, certain recuperative ideas can sneak in. One of these is the temptation to put newly acquired lands to economically productive use, out of a desire to achieve a higher standard of living along Western lines.

Closely related to the infiltration of a capitalist worldview, principally seen in the desirability of jobs and money, is the influx of evangelical Christianity. Evangelical churches are recruiting aggressively in South America, and their presence is always accompanied by a decrease in solidarity, an extension of the capitalist worldview, and a greater vulnerability to resource extraction and other development projects. Specifically in Wallmapu, evangelicals often work as snitches and they aggressively demonize the Mapuche culture. Communities in which the Christians have not yet taken root have a clear and effective solution—burn down the churches—but communities with an already significant Christian presence have lost their togetherness after the more conflictive moments of struggle passed and Christians could begin pushing for a successful reintegration into *winka* society or simply ignoring the earthly reality of social conflict.

Another major problem stems from the lack of access to electricity and water. Most Mapuche communities steal their electricity from existing power lines. But in the depths of the forestry plantations that occupy the greater part of Mapuche lands, there are no power lines to pilfer from. What's more, the exotic, genetically modified pine and eucalyptus planted in straight rows in a nearly endless monoculture (the World Bank labels these as "forests" in its development statistics) dry up the water table. In other words, many Mapuche communities have successfully kicked out the logging companies or big landlords, only to find that they could not have electricity and water in their newly reclaimed lands. Taking advantage of the vulnerable situation, logging companies and NGOs used charity to discourage resistance, building infrastructure projects to reward non-conflictive communities.

To overcome this obstacle, some Mapuche communities in struggle have begun looking for ways to set up their own water and electricity

infrastructure. In the furtherance of this goal, one community invited a handful of gringo anarchists with the necessary skills and resources to help them set up an electricity generation system that could subsequently be recreated in other communities. This article is about that collaborative project.

## The Community

We can call the community where the project took place Lof Pañihue. The people of Lof Pañihue lost their lands, along with the rest of the Mapuche, in the 1880s during the surprise invasion by Chile and Argentina. As with other *lof*, many *che* were killed, and others became refugees, eventually moving to the cities. A few were able to remain in the *lof* and rebuild, though their herds and the best of their lands had been stolen from them. The *rewe*, *ayllu rewe*, and *fiital mapu* with which the Mapuche had traditionally come together for ceremonies or defensive warfare had disintegrated.

The Chilean government was giving away Mapuche lands, and many gringos came and set up large estates on which the Mapuche had to labor as peons. The struggle in the early years was focused on survival, retaining their language and spirituality, and resisting the landlords. In the days of Allende and Pinochet, the Mapuche linked their struggle with the leftist anticapitalist movement in force at the time, often joining armed struggle groups like MIR and *Mapu-Lautaro*. Around that time, several thousand people were living in Lof Pañihue on just about a hundred acres of land. A large amount of land was nationalized by the Allende government as part of a program to eventually give it to poor people (Mapuche and *winka*) on an individualized commodity basis. The Pinochet government, however, gave this land to the logging companies, and Lof Pañihue was soon surrounded by pine plantations.

In the early '90s, many Mapuche embarked on an autonomous line of struggle, increasingly rejecting the leftist mode of struggle that had utilized the Mapuche as footsoldiers, or the Marxist analysis that insisted on branding them as peasants who had to join the international proletariat in order to advance and liberate themselves.

The people of Lof Pañihue occupied about a thousand acres that had been usurped by various latifundistas, using sabotage, attacks on police guardians, and constant pressure to eventually get the landlords to give up their claims. They also built houses and began farming or grazing on the recovered land. More recently, they began recovering another thousand acres currently usurped by a logging company. They have been

but technical skills were necessary for transforming that solidarity into an intensification of the struggle. Liberal arts education is a wasteland that imprisons North American anarchists. Without technical skills, we condemn ourselves to an anarchism of abstraction, incapable of rising above dependence on the structures of dominant society.

No one on this trip had the skills necessary to complete the project. But together, and with a lot of help from the *peñi* we worked with, we were able to pull it off by the skin of our teeth. This gave us the confidence and the experience to do something like this again. The rural Mapuche had the experience of building their own houses, and a couple of us had learned welding or at least a very basic familiarity with hand tools through squatting or an interest in tinkering. This might have barely been enough to construct one of the simpler water systems. But the more complex of the systems we were working on would have been entirely out of our reach had one of the comrades not had an attribute rare among anarchists these days: years of experience working in a factory. These extensive technical skills, however, would have been inadequate without the aid of those practiced at adapting to chaotic situations and scarce materials. Working in a factory, in the end, is nothing like working in the field. So the technical genius of the anarchist factory worker who participated on the project was completed by the practical genius of the Mapuche comrades who were used to making everything out of nothing. And finally, until all anarchists are polyglots, translation will be a necessary skill for international projects like these. However, translation alone can only enable projects centered on propaganda.

The skills we are talking about, in other words, go far beyond hobbies. We are talking about years of experience to acquire abilities that most of us lack, in order to overcome very immediate limitations to our struggle.

Finally, this project relied on a strategic projectuality. This means identifying our weaknesses and crafting projects that might overcome them, projecting ourselves into the breaches where our struggle might be overwhelmed in the near future. This is the opposite of doing for the sake of doing, or carrying out a predetermined and repetitive set of activities, which is how many anarchists spend their time.

The Mapuche had identified their lack of land, and they began to recover that land. Only within the situation they had created were we able to work on such a project together and learn things that may be useful in addressing weaknesses we face on our own turf.

The original solidarity trip three years ago was an attempt to overcome an identified weakness in the international relationships of US

not a patriarchal society. However, accepting that assertion requires allowing for a distinction between patriarchy and gender binary. In Western history, patriarchy and gender binary are largely inseparable. But are we willing to assert this as a global truth? Mapuche society is built around a traditional division of gender, but this division constitutes two autonomous spheres of activity, rather than a hierarchy. In practice, women are full participants in the Mapuche struggle. Some spaces of this struggle are mixed, others are separate, but none are made invisible or subordinate. The question that we as outsiders are unable to know is, what happens to those Mapuche who do not accept their assigned role?

Gender roles are gradually changing within the Mapuche struggle but, for better or for worse, the rhythm, form, and ends of that change are not necessarily recognizable to a feminist mode of struggle.

### What Made This Project Possible

I hope comrades will take it as a matter of high standards and not self-congratulation if I describe this project as a great success that goes far beyond the complacency and repetition of most anarchist projects. It was not a success because those who made it happen are particularly successful anarchists; on the contrary, we probably aren't. It was a success because we were able to identify our weaknesses and find comrades with the skills necessary to shore up those gaps.

In order to encourage better anarchist projects, I wanted to identify the prerequisites for making it happen. Although the project was a joint affair with Mapuche comrades, I can only talk about our side of things.

The most vital element were relationships of friendship and solidarity. These could only form face to face, sharing moments of struggle and of daily life. This is an indictment of the superficial solidarity of communiques, or the abstract solidarity of NGOs, both of which commit to the idea of a distant struggle, and are therefore incapable of enabling a solidarity intense enough to challenge our practice. The relationships that enabled our project could only form in a healthy way if people on both ends were committed to their own autonomous struggles, but willing to find points of contact and affinity between those struggles. This is an indictment of ally politics. Someone who is only an ally can never offer anything more than charity. Those who believe they are so privileged that they do not have their own reasons for fighting have nothing to offer anyone else. But we also had to recognize the fundamental difference of the Mapuche struggle, staying true to our beliefs but not trying to impose them.

Personal relationships created the possibility for a deeper solidarity,

cutting down pine for use as firewood and replanting native trees. With the return of the native trees, mountain lions, native birds, and other forms of life have also started to come back, including medicinal plants that the *machis* gather for traditional cures.

Multiple members of Lof Pañihue have been imprisoned, and others face an array of minor and serious charges, in retaliation for their struggle. The police maintain a constant level of repression against the community, and they have also destroyed houses, stolen tools, tear gassed babies, shot rubber bullets at the elderly, and beaten, harassed, and arrested their *weichafe*, *werken*, and *longko*.

In the face of the repression, a neighboring community gave up on land recovery actions, even though many in the community still did not have any land. In another controversial decision, they also accepted a charity project from the logging company that brought water to the village. But after just a couple years, the pipes broke, and the community has neither the know-how to fix them, nor the money to pay for replacement parts. That enforced dependence is a built-in part of charity. The logging company rewarded the community for giving up its struggle, but it was not so stupid as to hand out a reward that would permit any degree of independence. They did not involve the community in building the infrastructure, nor did they use cheap local parts that could be easily replaced.

The major obstacle faced by Lof Pañihue is the lack of water. Thanks to all the pine plantations, the middle of the valley where they and the other community are located goes bone dry in the summer. No water for drinking, no water for the animals, no water for the crops. There are year-round streams at the edge of the valley, but no power lines to steal electricity from. They don't need a lot of electricity, since they are not pursuing a Western model of development, but having radio and telephone is not only a major convenience, but a way that different communities stay in contact and spread the word about repression. And, let's not romanticize, the occasional washing machine is seen as a big plus.

If they can relocate their homes and gardens to the riparian side of the valley, leaving their current site for grazing, and if they find a way to generate power, then they will have land, electricity, water, their dignity, and a way forward in the struggle, whereas the community that accepted charity and made peace with the State will only have electricity and half the land they need.

### The Anarchists

We got the invitation through a Mapuche friend we had worked with on our previous trip to Wallmapu. Having been their guest, and having collaborated on land recovery, translation and diffusion about their struggle, prisoner support, and other projects, we had a personal basis of trust, solidarity, and friendship. Without that, they never would have thought of contacting us when they learned that a nearby community needed to find a way to generate its own electricity.

The next step was finding comrades who were interested in the project and had the needed skills. We prepared for several months making arrangements, getting resources together, and practicing techniques for the fabrication of different generation systems.

We also talked about our expectations and desires for the trip.

A clear priority for everyone involved was a total rejection of charity. We did not see ourselves as privileged people going to help underprivileged others, nor as allies to the Mapuche struggle. The only reason we considered going was because the Mapuche were struggling for their freedom, and we as anarchists were involved in a distinct but interconnected struggle for our own freedom. This was, in a sense, the “community of freedoms” Fredy Perlman writes about.

The purpose of the project was to deepen the relationship of solidarity between different people in struggle. We were being invited because of specific skills some of us had, but we had no illusions about being unique in that regard. Only because the Mapuche had created such a potent, insightful struggle was this project even possible. It is no coincidence that none of us had ever set up an electricity generation system before; never before had doing so held revolutionary implications. We wanted learning on this trip to go both ways, and we knew that it would. Speaking for myself, the conversations and experiences I had on the previous trip to Wallmapu, the worldview and the vision of struggle I encountered, forever altered my own practice as an anarchist.

Because it was impossible to communicate directly with the people in the community until we arrived, when planning the trip we decided we should begin with a conversation about our goals, motivations, and expectations. We would not get distracted by the technical details, as important as they were. We were not going to set up a generation system in a village, we were going to deepen our relationships. The material infrastructure was an anchor that would permit the intensification of anticapitalist relations, and a point of leverage for the liberated social relations to push back against the imposed capitalist social relations.

As such, success for the project could be defined as the following:

1: forming relationships that would enable mutual solidarity

warrior, and the *weichafe* are not the central participants in the struggle. The *weichafe* are not more important than the *machis*, the *werken*, or the *weupife*. On the contrary, the *weichafe* are at the service of the community, and their activity is in a certain sense meant to complement and be guided by the activity of the rest of the community.

The Mapuche have a lot of prisoners, and they do an excellent job of supporting those prisoners. But they do not fall into *presismo*, or a detached focus on their prisoners, an activity that certain anarchist circles present as the most radical. On the contrary, their focus remains on the struggle that resulted in people falling prisoner in the first place. The assertion that a powerful struggle supports its prisoners can be taken in two directions, after all. Supporting prisoners so that the struggle will be stronger, or strengthening the struggle so that the prisoners will be supported. Connected to the Mapuche success in supporting their prisoners and resisting heavy state repression, at least in my mind, is the long-term view that the Mapuche typically take. One can often hear the phrase, “We have been struggling for over 500 years, and we may have to struggle 500 more.”

This is interesting because the historical referent that frames this view—colonization—should be equally important to people of European descent and to anarchist theory itself. The State swelled exponentially with the early beginning of capitalism. What the Spanish state tried—and failed—to do to the Mapuche had already been done across Europe. The alienated worldview that anarchism has struggled with for its entire history, sometimes discarding it, sometimes reifying it, comes down to the separation of land and freedom which is the essence of colonization and all the political movements against colonization that have won freedom without land and land without freedom.

The same long view that could allow us to make historical sense of this alienation can also give us the patience to weather repression. As urgent as a particular case of repression may feel, we will not answer the broader questions of repression in our lifetimes, but we also do not face them alone: we have gone through all of this before.

A common criticism that anarchists might have of the Mapuche struggle has to do with gender. But this criticism should be put into perspective. As a friend in the project aptly put it, “Our opinion about gender in Mapuche society doesn’t matter.” It would also be wrong to assume that our opinion is entirely external. In fact, it was a criticism shared by several Mapuche comrades, although they tended to frame it in a different way.

We were able to talk frankly about gender with several of the *lamuen* and *peñi* we were closer with. Many of them said that the *machismo* of Chilean society had rubbed off on the Mapuche, which was traditionally

They also asked why so many anarchists were vegans, not seeing a connection between respecting animals and not eating them. Fortunately, most of the anarchists they had met, in addition to being vegans, held strong criticisms of civilization. I worry that, had their prior experience been with leftist anarchists who believed in the narrative of civilization and progress, they might never have reached out to us. As it was, none of us were vegan, and all of us were critical of civilization, so we got along just fine.

Then there were a couple specific grievances they had, both relating to Chilean anarchists. One was an occasional imposition of rhythms, as when a group of masked anarchists started smashing banks at a Mapuche solidarity demo in Santiago. The Mapuche were not opposed to smashing banks, quite the contrary, but they did object to what seemed like anarchists trying to speed up their struggle.

The other grievance related to a video they had seen on TV of a Santiago anarchist transporting a bomb which blew up prematurely. The surveillance video portrayed the anarchist catching on fire, and his comrade running away and leaving him there. The Mapuche would never abandon a comrade like that, they said. They attributed it to inexperience on the anarchists' part. One question they asked us frequently was how long we had been involved in the struggle and what had made us become anarchists.

A Mapuche friend who was close enough to not have to worry about politeness chided us anarchists for not having *newen*. This will be an especially difficult difference to explain, especially since the closest analog to *newen* among North American anarchists is “woo” or “magic,” and the concepts seem completely different in practice. Suffice it to say that a comparison would be misleading. In my experience the Mapuche are very matter-of-fact about *newen*. Beyond simply rejecting a mechanical, scientific view of the world, as do many anarchists, the Mapuche live out a different worldview that is firmly anchored in the totality of their economic, spiritual, and physiological life, and therefore they do not relate to *newen* as a performance in an alienated spiritual sphere.

I will point to a few other differences pertaining directly to the Mapuche vision of struggle that I think can be instructive for anarchists.

The Mapuche in struggle are far from pacifist. On the contrary, sabotage, direct action, self-defense, and the attack are assumed as an integral part of their struggle, and the topic of burning things down is a constant source of mirth and laughter, exactly as it is with anarchists (which is surprising, given that humor is often the first thing not to translate). The similarity ends there. Not every Mapuche is expected to be a *weichafe*, or

2: working together with *peñi* and *lamuen* in a collective process to install one or several models of electricity generation using local materials, with an emphasis on passing on skills, such that the model could be recreated without external aid and set up in other communities in struggle.

In other words, if we effectively set up an electricity generation system in a community and left, and the people there did not know how to make another one on their own, the project would have been a failure for us.

## The Project

Solely on a technical level, the project was fairly complicated. The plan was to fabricate one system that would use wood chips to create power, and one or two run-of-river systems that would use pressurized water to turn a drive shaft and generate electricity.

Logistically, it became even more complicated. We needed to get a workshop space, an arc welder, a gas welder, an angle grinder, a drill, a metal lathe, a dozen hand tools, and a hundred other items that would constitute the primary materials. We had to get the materials as cheap as possible, in local stores and junkyards, so we could be sure that the *peñi* and *lamuen* could replicate everything after we had left. Then we had to build everything with Mapuche comrades so that they would learn the process. And we had to do all this in a context of constant repression, with new arrests and raids happening every week, some of them directly impacting on the project. The possibility of being arrested, deported, and banned from Chile hung over us throughout the entire project, should the state decide to define what we were doing as a political activity. The Chilean constitution prohibits foreigners from participating in political activities, and the state's repression against the Mapuche specifically aims to isolate—one community from another, and all of Wallmapu from the outside world. To us, the project was not at all a “political activity,” in fact it went far deeper, and precisely for that reason we had to be extremely careful and low key.

A couple of friends took us out to Lof Pañgihue for the first time. The police seemed to know we were coming and controlled us near the entrance to the community, but that was hardly unexpected, given the level of surveillance they use against the Mapuche struggle.

The initial conversation between us and the *longko* and several *werken* and *lamuen* of the community went as well as we could have hoped. They explained their struggle to us, and the history of their community: the loss of their land with the Chilean invasion, further losses during the Pinochet dictatorship, the manipulations of their Marxist allies, the

autonomous path of their struggle, the beginning of forceful land recoveries, the repression, the lack of water, the dependence on state electricity infrastructure.

Then we explained why we were there, that we were anarchists fighting against the State, that we respected the Mapuche struggle and wanted to create stronger connections of solidarity, that we came to help them set up a system for generating electricity but it was absolutely important for us not to create dynamics of charity. We recognized that we would be gaining a great deal from them, and learning things that would be helpful for our own struggle.

They thanked us for coming and asked us what models we were proposing to build. The only models for ecological electricity generation that they had had contact with were wind and solar, which in their region were only ever used by rich landlords.

We explained the two systems and their benefits. They were much better suited to the region, geographically and climatically, than wind or solar. They were more discreet, harder for the police to find and destroy during a raid, and cheaper to replace should they be broken. They would not hurt the land: the wood system only released as much carbon as the trees serving as fuel had taken out of the atmosphere, meaning as long as they weren't deforesting their land there would be no net pollution. The only other waste product was charcoal which could serve as fertilizer. And the water system only required a small stream running down a slope. The stream would not have to be extensively dammed or diverted, and all the water taken from it would be returned to it. Both systems could be made with materials available in the stores and scrapyards of the nearest city.

We told them we had raised the money for all the costs of installing an electricity generation system, but to expand that system to meet the needs of the whole community, or to set one up in another community, they would have to meet those costs. However both models were designed to be highly economical and durable. The most expensive, inaccessible part was the alternator in the water system and the generator in the wood system, but the cost was not too great for a whole community to assume.

They liked the proposal, and they took us out to the site to make sure the geography and the available water supply were adequate. Then we had lunch together and talked a while about our respective struggles. In the evening we made ready to head back to the city, where other Mapuche comrades were looking for tools and a workshop. The *werken* from Lof Pañgihue said they would hold an assembly for the whole community to decide on our proposal, but he was sure everyone would be excited about it, as they had been talking about the need for such a project for some time.

without prison nor state." They have living memory of a stateless, decentralized society, and with this memory as a lens, all coercive institutions, from prisons to schools, appear as building blocks of their colonization.

Given the importance of these affinities, along with the sincerity and dedication of the Mapuche I have met and the resilience of their struggle, I am inclined to pay attention to the differences. Not because I think we can or should copy the Mapuche struggle, nor out of a romanticized idea that their struggle has no failings. But it is a powerful, inspiring struggle, and the differences between their version of a stateless struggle and our own cannot help but aid us in reflecting on our own strategies.

A couple of the people we got to know in Lof Pañgihue were remarkably upfront with their criticisms, though they made it clear that those criticisms came from a place of respect. They praised Chilean anarchists for their consistent, disinterested solidarity with the Mapuche struggle, and noted that they were piqued when they saw that anarchists were fighting against the State, placing bombs, and going to prison; clearly these were committed enemies of the established order. However, they did not have a clear idea of what the anarchists were fighting for. Those who had spent time in the city had seen anarchist social centers and libraries, but what were the anarchists actually trying to create?

All the major leftist anticapitalist groups in earlier decades had used the Mapuche as footsoldiers and "the Mapuche conflict" as a mere source of discontent. It became clear to many that should the Marxist guerrillas ever win, they would only impose a new Western order on Wallmapu, as had happened to every other indigenous nation when Marxists had taken over. For them, independence specifically meant not being subordinated to a state.

The anarchists had only been around for a short time in Chile, eight years in their estimation. Because it was not clear what the anarchists wanted, they were cautious that they might also be fighting for power. Should they ally with anarchists and win, would the anarchists accept that they did not have any say on what happened in the lands south of the Bío Bío river, or would they also try to impose on the Mapuche territories? Did the anarchists have an answer for the "Mapuche conflict" or would they respect Mapuche autonomy?

They did not understand why solidarity events at the anarchist social centers often turned into parties. What did the parties have to do with the struggles or prisoners they were supporting? Mapuche solidarity events often focus on letting people know why they are struggling, and the rightness of their struggle, or on holding a ceremony that would bring *newen* to their prisoners.

in general they have chosen to frame both of these as unified entities. Some Mapuche believe in political parties, in NGOs, or in Marxist dogma about economics. But one aspect of their shared framing of the struggle is a focus on the communities and the land. This is the center of the Mapuche struggle, where communities are regaining their land, and it is precisely where leftists, NGOs, and political parties have the least hold. The former are all given a niche by the institutions of the State, whether the media, the universities, or the development funds, meaning they tend to only have a presence in the cities.

Among the Mapuche in the communities, or those in the nearest cities who focus on aiding the rural struggle rather than leading it, there is a clear tendency to reject the State, capitalism, Christianity, and the entire Western worldview, including the pernicious narrative of progress.

Many *peñi* and *lamuen* we met had a crystal clear view of what was going on in Bolivia and how much it represented what they wanted to avoid. The “plurinational state” of the indigenous Evo Morales had recognized various indigenous peoples within Bolivian territory, putting their rights down on paper, and this had changed absolutely nothing. Legal recognition meant nothing as long as they did not have their land. But “having their land” in the Western sense was also meaningless, because it would only imply individualized title to a commodity that had to be put to productive use on the market in order to be maintained.

The Mapuche are the “people of the land.” In their idiom, as with many other indigenous peoples, “having land” is interchangeable with “belonging to land.” It cannot be just any land, divided into parcels. It must be the land with which they have a historical, spiritual, and economic connection. Mapuche land recovery is an assault on authority at the most fundamental level, because it destroys the very meaning of the capitalist idiom, denying the Western construction of the individual, and insisting on the inalienability of person and environment.

This is a more fleshed out, studied view of what anarchists were going for when they first took up the call, “land and freedom.” It is no coincidence that anarchists, open to the possibility of learning from other struggles rather than imposing a unifying dogma, adopted this slogan in part from indigenous people fighting in southern Mexico in the days of Zapata and Magon. Marxists, meanwhile, declared such a posture to be reactionary, believing that agriculture had to be industrialized and taking for granted, therefore, the alienation between person and land.

At a panel discussion about repression in the communities, the Mapuche youth organizing the event hung a banner over the speaker’s table that read: *Wallmapu liberado, sin cárcel ni estado*. “Wallmapu freed,

They would call us soon with confirmation and measurements from the site so we could start getting materials, and then they would arrange to send some people to the city to work alongside us and learn how to build these systems.

The day could hardly have been more fortuitous, but we encountered an early problem that would later create serious difficulties. Although we had been preparing on our end for months, because of limited and insecure communication, preparations in Wallmapu had not been able to move forward. The community had been able to send out its request, but had not been able to get detailed information about the specific proposal in order to start preparing. The logistics on this project were far more complicated than on the project three years ago, requiring local knowledge and very specific skills, and we did not have the direct connections to begin organizing those logistics until we arrived in Wallmapu. But as they say, sometimes you need to do something before you can get the skills and resources you need to be able to do it. This was definitely the case with our project.

But initially, back in the city, things went fast. Other Mapuche comrades who were friends of the friends we made last time helped us find the cheapest shops and the best junkyards. It helped immensely that several of them were welders, mechanics, or other technical workers, so they had all the necessary tools and knew where to get things we never could have found in a month.

Shortly, we got confirmation from the community that they wanted to work with us to realize this project, but they had to delay a bit before they could come to the city. So we waited. Days turned to a week before they told us they would not be able to come. Repression clearly played a role in this, but it also made us worry that the project would not be fully participatory, that it might slip across the line from solidarity to charity.

We had not wasted the entire week, since we continued getting to know the comrades in the city, sharing meals with them, learning the local histories of struggle, sharing stories about our own battles. But there was no way around the fact that our time there was limited, and with one week less, we were beginning to lose the chance at the nice leisurely pace we had originally envisioned.

Discussing it with everyone involved, we decided to start fabricating the systems with a couple *peñi* from the city who were already experienced welders or builders. They would then be able to show others how to make the systems.

Still, we had vastly different rhythms. The *peñi* worked full time, and sometimes on weekends too, and they also had a completely different concept of punctuality. It soon became clear that to get done in time, we

would have to do a lot of the fabrication ourselves, and then on our relatively short time together focus on practicing vital techniques and explaining the overall process of fabrication.

It was far from ideal and all the delays and time alone made us entertain serious doubts. Were we giving more importance to this project than our Mapuche comrades? Was the shared participation we were striving for a lie? So we (this being the reduced group of gringo anarchists) talked it out and decided that if the promised participation was not forthcoming, we would leave the two generation systems half-finished and head for home. It was neither an ultimatum nor a surrender, just the recognition that letting solidarity devolve into charity would be the worst possible outcome of the trip. It was far better, from the perspective of anti-State struggle, to leave half-completed systems rather than fully completed systems, because that meant that the generation systems would only ever be more than semi-expensive junk if the people they were intended for learned how to finish making and installing them.

Fortunately, we were able to have a heart-to-heart with a couple of the *peñi* in the city, both of whom helped set us straight. Having a heart-to-heart conversation about the possible failure of a major project is no easy matter, especially when there are huge cultural differences and the other people involved, while friends of friends, were total strangers until a few weeks earlier. The outcome underscores the importance of good communication and solid relationships based on friendship. The “dead time” we had spent waiting for the chance to get to work, and instead hanging out with new friends and getting to know one another, was more important in the end than the technical work on the systems, as the latter would have failed without the former, and the former—the good relationships—opens a whole world of possibilities and other projects.

The comrades we spoke with clarified for us how little detailed information had gotten through before our arrival, making it impossible to prepare in advance. They told us how enthusiastic many of them were about this project, and how such a project constituted an important and needed step forward in their struggle. They reiterated how they had limited time, and while they were fully committed, could not help out more than a few days a week, which just didn't mesh with our schedule of coming for a month and working every day. And they clued us in that Mapuche from the countryside operated on a completely different calendar and there was absolutely no way around that. While those who lived in the city might say 8 and arrive at 10, the Mapuche from the countryside would say Monday and arrive on Wednesday.

Being told that it was a question of different rhythms helped us

understand the difficulties we had been having and feel good about the time that had gone by, since we had no desire to impose our pace. The local rhythm will always take precedence over whatever expectations of rhythm outsiders may bring with them. In short order we saw ample proof that the Mapuche comrades in no way lacked commitment, and it was in fact still their initiative.

But the fact that we so closely approached defeat, in my mind, was perfect. It forced us to draw a line, to define victory, and we decided it was better to accept failure than to declare a false victory.

Shortly thereafter, a couple *peñi* from the community arrived, helped us get a few more materials that had so far eluded us, and took us and the equipment back to the *lof*. We worked feverishly the next few days, as we had pushed back our timeline considerably and our return dates were approaching. But the work in Lof Pañgihue was incredibly inspiring. We woke up every morning while the stars were still out, the *lamuen* set up a cooking fire, we discussed the day's work together, and some of us cooked or acquired materials while the rest of us labored together along the river bed, speaking in a mixture of Spanish, English, and Mapudungun, digging, building frames, reworking the turbine, and installing the electronics. When it got dark, we would stop, but the conversations about the project and about our larger struggles would go on over supper and until midnight.

At the end of it all, seeing the pulleys connected to the alternators begin to turn, that unassuming circular motion was one of the most beautiful sights.

## Affinity and Difference

When working together with anarchists from another country, you typically find that you speak the same revolutionary idiom and share an overwhelming affinity which is put into sharp relief by certain cultural and historical differences, which often prove useful for self-reflection by the contrast they provide.

Working together with Mapuche who are struggling for full independence, the gulf is even wider. Our histories share few common reference points (though these are of extreme importance), our worldviews are different, and we communicate within distinct idioms of struggle. The strong points of affinity capable of bridging this difference have all the more meaning, and reflect on anarchist ideas about decentralized global struggle.

Neither the Mapuche nor their struggle are homogenous; however